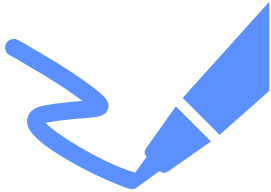




People often think that editing and proofreading are two names for the same thing, but they're not! Editing has a different function to proofreading and occurs at a different stage in the writing process.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EDITING & PROOFREADING?



Editing is a process of **critically evaluating** the work and assessing whether it has met its objectives. It includes evaluating the structure, content, style, tone, and evidence. When editing, you are aiming to **improve** the sense and logic of your material.

Proofreading takes place after the editing process on the final draft. When proofreading, you are looking for mistakes regarding spelling, punctuation, capitalisation, or formatting. Once you have corrected these errors, you should have a clean, final copy ready for submission.

THE EDITING PROCESS

There are several stages in the editing process. These vary from project to project, but generally speaking, we can divide them into:

- The structural edit
- The content edit
- The style or copy edit

THE STRUCTURAL EDIT

The purpose of the structural edit is to ensure that your writing is sustained and coherent. This means editing for **purpose** and **logical development**. Begin by returning to the assignment question and rubric.

- Have you answered the question clearly?
- Have you addressed any specific tasks outlined in the rubric?
- Have you made the aim or objective of the paper clear?

Then have a look at the introduction of your paper:

- Is your thesis statement clearly stated and reflected in your conclusion?
- Have you provided sufficient background or context for the reader?
- Have you provided an outline for the rest of the paper?

Next, look at each body paragraph:

- Does each paragraph contain a single, unified idea?
- Does it begin with a topic sentence that clearly states its focus?
- Does it link back to your overall thesis, or the following paragraph?



EDITING AND PROOFREADING



THE CONTENT EDIT

Next comes looking at the content of your assignment. This means evaluating the ideas you've presented and checking for relevance, overlaps, and clarity.

- Is every point relevant? If not, why is it there?
- Are any ideas repeated?
- Is any information missing? This might mean you've excluded an important clarifying example, or an important piece of evidence to back up an idea.
- Does every point make sense? Have you provided the reader with sufficient information to understand not only what the idea means, but how it is relevant to the thesis, and is connected to your other points?

THE STYLE OR COPY EDIT



The style or copy edit might seem the most like proofreading, but we're not there yet. The style edit is where we focus on the language and tone of our work. It's important to consider who your audience is (real or imagined), the purpose of your work, and the form of your assignment (e.g. essay or report). Why have you used the language you've used?

For example, are you writing a formal research essay aimed to inform an academic audience of your understanding of a concept? Or is are you writing a reflective piece that aims to show your tutor your past experience and learning goals? This will inform what you're looking for when you conduct the style edit. Consider:

- Is the language, style, and tone appropriate for your audience and form?
- Have you used transition words and signposting to guide the reader?
- Are your evidence and examples clearly connected to your ideas?

[SEE THE GUIDE ON USING THE RIGHT LANGUAGE](#)

We often assume that editing for style means making our language sound more 'academic'. However, good academic language is clear, concise, and precise. This means, sometimes, we actually need to simplify.

CHECK FOR:	WHY?	EXAMPLES
UNNECESSARILY COMPLEX LANGUAGE	Good academic language should be simple and direct. Let your content be complex, not your language.	Simplify 'utilise' to 'use', 'due to the fact that' to 'as', 'in relation to' to 'about', 'in the event that' to 'if'
REDUNDANT LANGUAGE	Redundancies are words and phrases that repeat the same idea. We can usually drop the repetition without losing meaning.	'a comparative study covering both aspects of', 'rough estimation', 'end result', 'absolutely perfect', 'regular routine', 'new innovations'
VAGUE WORDS AND EMPTY MODIFIERS	Modifiers are words that change the word they're describing. An <i>empty</i> modifier, however, adds little to the meaning of the word. Often, it can make it vague and inaccurate. How big is 'huge?' How much is 'very?' Try to be as precise as possible.	'huge', 'very', 'considerable', 'kind of', 'more or less', 'tiny', 'quite', 'extremely', 'somewhat'



PROOFREADING



Proofreading is the final check we do before we submit. Don't waste your time and proofread before you've finished writing! Proofreading is when we look out for the remaining errors that we didn't pick up during the editing process. Look out for:

- Typos, spelling errors, or incorrect word use
- Punctuation and grammatical errors
- Incorrect references
- Inconsistent formatting

Remember that spell check only corrects spelling errors. Often, we might use the incorrect version of a word, which may not be picked up. Read closely to try to pick up these little errors.

Finally, check if your college or topic has a preferred style guide for formatting. If they don't, use a simple font such as Times New Roman or Calibri, size 11 or 12 font, with 1.5 or double line spacing. Most of all, ensure your formatting is consistent.

TIPS FOR EDITING AND PROOFREADING

Editing and proofreading work best when you give yourself as much distance between yourself and your draft as possible. Ideally, don't look at your paper for 2-3 days. If you're too close to the work, you'll see what you expect to see, not what is actually there! Consider:

- **Edit in a quiet space with fresh eyes.**
Give yourself space to focus and concentrate. Editing in a different space to where you wrote the draft can also help create distance between yourself and the work.
- **Have a friend read your paper and tell you what it's about.**
This is a good way of testing the logic and objectives of your paper. If their interpretation of your argument, main points, or key ideas isn't what you thought it is, there might be a problem.
- **Read out loud.**
Reading aloud can help you hear errors that your eyes don't see. If your tongue stumbles, it's likely there's a problem with your expression or grammar.
- **Edit on paper.**
If you've written on a computer, as many of us do, reading in print can help you pick up small proofreading errors.
- **Read backwards.**
When it comes to proofreading, we want to find the small problems rather than issues with logic or structure. Trick your eye. Read each sentence independently, starting from the final sentence and work backwards. It's tedious, but it slows down your eye and helps you to see the mistakes.
- **Use a ruler.**
Another way to slow down your eye is to place a ruler under each line and check your text word for word.

